

REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: San Mateo Creek Basin NPL Proposal

DATE: May 7, 2018

CONTACT: Carl Edlund

PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: For Information DEADLINE DATE: Not Applicable

BACKGROUND:

EPA Region 6, with assistance from New Mexico Environment Department (NMED), initiated a phased ground water investigation for the San Mateo Creek Basin (the Site) to assess the nature and extent of contamination in the alluvial aquifer related to legacy uranium mining and milling. The results from Phase 1 were released in November 2016. Phase 2 is currently underway and will be released this fall.

CURRENT STATUS:

EPA is currently evaluating this Site for potential National Priorities List (NPL) proposal and conducting outreach activities with state, tribes and local community partners. EPA received a letter of support for potential NPL inclusion from New Mexico on January 12, 2018. EPA has held meetings with local governments, consultation with Navajo Nation, and calls with federal partners and continues to schedule additional outreach with stakeholders. EPA met with former operators on March 20, 2018, to discuss the proposal and the concerns the mine companies had with the NPL listing. EPA has committed to providing the former operators a draft statement of work and administrative order on consent on May 18, 2018, to negotiate a remedial investigation and feasibility study of the basin.

ENVIRONMENTAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS:

Contaminated mine discharge has impacted private drinking wells and could impact municipal water supplies for Milan and Grants, impacting over 12,000 residents. The proposal of the Site on the NPL allows EPA to take a comprehensive approach to address threats to drinking water while engaging responsible parties and stakeholders.

TECHNICAL CONCERNS:

- Limited information is known on the impacts to the deeper aquifers.

REGULATORY/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Some of the source mines for the contamination are part of the Tronox Settlement.
- Some of the source mines for the contamination have mine closure permits and water discharge permits issued by the State agencies.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

- Communities, including tribes, have concern about their drinking water supplies.
- Communities within the Grants Mining District are worried about economic development. A state bill has been proposed to support job training opportunities.
- Bluewater Valley Downstream Alliance (BVDA) and Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE) are two engaged community groups with interest in the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

For EPA to continue with the rulemaking process proposing to add the Site to the NPL.



Workforce Diversity, Environmental Stewardship Character, Accountability, Respect, Excellence